

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims:

1. – 6. Cancelled.

7. (New) A method for releasing a function limitation of a software installed in a user terminal, comprising the steps of:

a first transmitting step of transmitting an identification code and a license code used for identifying the software and a terminal code fixedly allocated to the use terminal and unique thereto to an authentication server via a network, the license code being a first digital signature generated with the identification code and a license private key;

a first determination step, by the authentication server, of checking validity of the license code using a license public key paired with the license private key, accepting the identification code when the license code is determined to be valid, and terminating the process of releasing the function limitation of the software when the license code is determined to be invalid, wherein the license public key is predetermined to be valid in the authentication server based on the agreement between a first temporary license public key generated using a second digital signature and a route public key paired with a route private key and a second temporary license public key in a license key certificate data generated using the license public key and the second digital signature, the second digital signature being generated with the license public key and the route private key;

a second determination step of reading data recorded on a data table in the authentication server, determining whether the license code transmitted to the authentication server at the first

transmitting step is recorded on the data table in the authentication server, determining whether the terminal code corresponding to the transmitted license code recorded on the data table is equal to or less than a predetermined number when the transmitted license code is recorded on the data table, recording the terminal code transmitted to the authentication server at the first transmitting step with the license code corresponding thereto on the data table when the terminal code is equal to or less than the predetermined number, and terminating the process of releasing the function limitation of the software when the terminal code is more than the predetermined number;

a generating step, by the authentication server, of generating a third digital signature using at least the identification code, the terminal code, the license code, and an activation private key;

a second transmitting step, by the authentication server, of generating an activation code using at least the identification code, the terminal code, the license code, an authentication server certificate data, and the third digital signature, and transmitting the generated activation code to the user terminal via the network, wherein the authentication server certificate data is generated using a fourth digital signature and an activation public key paired with the activation private key, the fourth digital signature being generated with at least the activation public key and the route private key;

a third determination step, by the user terminal, of extracting the authentication server certificate data from the activation code, checking validity of the fourth digital signature in the authentication server certificate data using the route public key, accepting the activation public key when the fourth digital signature is valid, and terminating the process of releasing the function limitation of the software when the fourth digital signature is invalid;

a fourth determination step, by the user terminal, of checking validity of the third digital signature in the activation code using the activation public key accepted at the third determination step, accepting the identification code, the terminal code, the license code in the activation code

when the third digital signature is valid, and terminating the process of releasing the function limitation of the software when the third digital signature is invalid; and

a releasing step, by the user terminal, of determining whether the identification code and the terminal code in the activation code correspond to the identification code and the terminal code transmitted at the first transmitting step, releasing the function limitation of the software when these codes correspond, and terminating the process of releasing the function limitation of the software when these codes do not correspond.

8. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the route public key is stored in the software and the third determination step obtains the route public key from the software.

9. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the generating step generates the third digital signature using a software expiration date indicating an expiration of the software as well as the identification code, the terminal code, the license code, and the activation private key; and the releasing step releases the function limitation of the software only until the software expiration date.